



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address by the Chairman-in-Office for 2003

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna
January 13, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to join all my colleagues here in warmly welcoming Foreign Minister de Hoop Scheffer and the initiation of the new Dutch Chairmanship. The OSCE is in excellent hands as we begin work this year on a very complex, yet very exciting and challenging, series of tasks that will set the course for the organization for years to come. I have just returned yesterday from a whole week in Washington in consultations. I must share with you that there is a sense of excitement about your assumption of the chairmanship, and also one of concern, which I would like to share with all of our colleagues here. The concern is that looking to the great capability of the Dutch Foreign Ministry we all don't just jump on the wagon and let you pull it, but that we also put our shoulders to the wheel to help you move the wagon along. One of the great dangers facing us here is that we assume you will do a great job. We do assume that, but we know that in order to achieve it you will need the help of everyone around this table here today.

We had some significant accomplishments last year, in which we can take real satisfaction: the decision to develop an OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century, the creation of the Annual Security Review Conference, the decision, and plans, to enhance OSCE's anti-terrorism efforts, the further development of OSCE anti-trafficking activities, a focus on anti-discrimination in all its forms, including a conference on anti-Semitism, to name only a few. I cannot refer to those achievements without paying tribute to the work of the previous Chair. Our collective successes last year were in very great part due to the hard, and very well done, work and efforts of Ambassador Seixas da Costa and his team. They have left for you a solid foundation on which to build a successful Dutch Chairmanship.

In your address, Mr. Foreign Minister, you outlined a number of key themes that I would like both strongly to endorse and reiterate. These include continued commitment to the full range of OSCE commitments, the concept that real progress is best achieved through cooperative efforts and active participation by all partners, and the fundamental theme underlying all of OSCE's activities – that peace and stability can only reliably be promoted by developing participatory democracy, democratic rule of law, ensuring the full protection of human rights to all members of our societies, and by developing market-oriented economies. The equation is simple: human rights leads to civil rights, leads to democracy, leads to a market economy, leads to a better way of life for all of the peoples in the OSCE universe.

You were absolutely right, Mr. Minister, in your remark that successfully countering terrorism and extremism requires such an approach, that participatory democracy, the free exercise of the right of peaceful dissent, and protection of human rights promotes, rather than

hinders, the social peace and stability essential for political stability and the fight against terrorism. This has been a bedrock principle of this organization since the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. As we work this year, then, to flesh out the Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century, we must keep democratic transformation of societies and the protection of human rights firmly among the core issues on which we will focus. Without that, no matter what good work we do in other spheres, our efforts overall will fail.

The United States strongly supports the emphasis being placed by the Chair on anti-trafficking efforts, both of persons and of arms and drugs. These scourges are proper focuses for us all individually, but also excellent examples of areas in which the OSCE can be a prime actor in fostering cooperation. The simple fact is that trafficking, in all its forms, is a worldwide problem. It is unique to none of us and affects us all, and OSCE offers an ideal forum in our region for developing transnational programs and cooperation to deal with it. Toward this end, cooperation with other international organizations and institutions must be strengthened in all spheres of work in which the OSCE is engaged.

OSCE should also be a key player in cooperative efforts to combat transnational crime and the cancer of corruption that it feeds, and off of which it feeds. This effort is closely related to our anti-trafficking focus, and it requires broad cooperation, and deals as well with issues that affect the internal peace and stability of all states. The continuing enhancement and development of OSCE police reform programs is a welcome addition to our collective set of tools for combating this common scourge. I want, however, to stress one point referring back to my, and Foreign Minister de Hoop Scheffer's, earlier comments: when we talk about police reform we are talking about more than simply enhancing professional police skills, important though that task is. We are talking every bit as much about promoting police behavior appropriate to democratic societies, and if we lose sight of this goal, we may well wind up doing more harm than good.

Mr. Chairman, the Dutch Chairmanship opens with a full and exciting agenda. The United States takes the challenges, and opportunities, before us very seriously, and is committed to working as closely and cooperatively as possible with you and our colleagues here. A serious cooperative approach, though, must be shared by all here, and I will not conceal that our leadership in Washington, and I, personally, are disturbed by some trends we have seen developing the past several years and that continue to powerfully manifest themselves this past year right up until December 31, 2002. Our responsibility to our peoples requires that we seek to rise above our sometimes differing views and find constructive approaches to dealing with admittedly difficult problems. I have always felt that the supreme skill of diplomacy is to bring together the best ideas, the affirmative parts of various proposals and to forge a constructive solution, based on that. The "lowest common denominator" approach should never be taken as a satisfactory outcome or goal here, lest we diminish this organization to meaninglessness. We know that you share this view, as well as the idea that OSCE's goal should be to do the maximum possible good rather than the minimum required for containment.

2003 turns a new page. Let us write such a page in OSCE and world history of which our governments will be proud.

With such an approach, then, we look forward with confidence to the Dutch Chairmanship.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.